



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR CONSULAR AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON

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Division of Field Operations

February 13, 2006

Dear Mr. Wickmark:

I am writing in the hope that as the director of the Washington agency with responsibility for the licensing of adoption service providers, you might be able to assist the U.S. Department of State with a public awareness and outreach campaign we are spearheading on the important issue of post-placement reporting on children whom U.S. citizens have adopted from Ukraine. Specifically, we are working to convince parents of approximately 900 Ukrainian adopted children to submit post-placement reports on their children to the Ukrainian government.

Over the past 10 years, Americans have adopted more than 5,700 children from Ukraine. Just in the U.S. Government's 2005 fiscal year, which ran from October 1, 2004, to September 30, 2005, American families were able to provide permanent homes to 821 Ukrainian children who otherwise would have remained in non-permanent arrangements, mostly in orphanages and other institutions. This placed Ukraine fifth worldwide in terms of the number of orphans who joined families in the United States.

Unfortunately, the continuing ability of American families to help even more Ukrainian children like these is in serious jeopardy. In late September, the director of the Ukrainian National Adoption Center (NAC) decided to stop accepting new applications from prospective adoptive parents from the United States and five other countries, on the grounds that too many previous adoptive parents from these countries had failed to comply with Ukraine's mandatory post-placement reporting requirements. In November, the NAC director eased the ban somewhat when she decided to begin accepting applications from prospective parents who wanted to adopt children over age 10, children whose biological siblings had previously been adopted by the same family, and children with identified special needs. Apart from these limited categories of children, however, the ban would remain in effect until parents from the six countries achieved a 100 percent compliance rate in submitting their delinquent post-placement reports. In December, Ukraine reinstated four of the six countries after their citizens achieved full compliance; today, only France and the United States remain under the ban.

Mr. Steve Wickmark,  
Acting Director, Field Operations,  
Children's Administration,  
Dept of Social and Health Services,  
P. O. Box 45700,  
Olympia, Washington 98504-5700.

On January 19, I hosted a meeting with the Ukrainian Minister of Family, Youth and Sports, Yuriy Pavlenko, whose Ministry is scheduled to take over responsibility for adoption processing on May 1 of this year. Minister Pavlenko stressed the great importance his government places on achieving the highest possible level of compliance in post-placement reports. He also said that Ukraine is missing reports on nearly 900 children adopted by American citizens between 1996 and 2004. While emphasizing that the U.S. Government does not have the legal authority to compel U.S. citizens to comply with foreign laws, I committed to Minister Pavlenko that the Bureau of Consular Affairs would do everything we legally could to improve the compliance rate. Too many children are still waiting in Ukrainian orphanages for us to allow their hopes of a permanent family to be dashed.

In this context, and as part of my commitment to Minister Pavlenko, the Bureau of Consular Affairs has launched a broad-based outreach campaign to publicize to the greatest extent possible the importance of American families' fulfilling the promises they made at the time of adoption to comply with the Ukrainian post-placement reporting requirements. The U.S. Embassy in Kiev, Ukraine, already explains these requirements to parents when the families visit the Embassy to obtain the children's immigration documentation. We have also assembled a loose coalition of U.S. adoption agencies operating in Ukraine who have committed, as I have, to working with American families to increase the compliance rate – not just in future cases, but perhaps even more importantly on the 900 children whose post-placement reports the Ukrainian government views as delinquent. We also understand the importance of assuaging the families' concerns that by filing post-placement reports, they will somehow be endangering their children or running the risk that Ukraine will take their children, which is not the case.

It is in this context that I am writing to you today. I would like to respectfully request that you convey to the adoption agencies licensed in Washington through whatever mechanism you might deem most appropriate and effective, the simple message that non-compliance with Ukrainian post-placement reporting requirements is having a very real, negative effect on the ability of other American families to adopt Ukrainian children. In addition, I believe that a message from your office to these agencies, asking them to review their files and follow up with families who have previously adopted from Ukraine, could also be extremely productive.

In closing, please let me express my gratitude for anything you might be willing and able to do to help us in this endeavor. Should you or any Washington adoption agencies have any questions about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Christopher Lamora, the Chief of our Intercountry Adoption Unit, at (202) 663-2928.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Maura' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Maura Harty